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Chairman:	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou	(Cameroon)
later:	Ms. Londoño (Vice-Chairperson)	(Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 105: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly *(continued)* (A/58/172 and A/58/204)

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/58/3[1], A/58/61-E/2003/5, A/58/67-E/2003/49, A/58/79, A/58/153, A/58/159, A/58/229 and A/C.3/58/L.2)

Agenda item 107: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing *(continued)* (A/58/160)

1. **Mr. Mahiga** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. Only one year remained before the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, one of whose commitments had been to promote social integration. The report of the Secretary-General on the World Social Situation in 2003 (A/58/153) showed, however, that that undertaking, enshrined as a goal in the Millennium Declaration, was still a long way from being fulfilled.

2. For more than 30 years, developing countries had been calling on developed countries to respect the ODA target of 0.7% of their GDP. To date, however, only five developed countries had attained that target and there was little indication of will on the part of others to follow their example. Yet ODA played a major role in complementing domestic sources of financing development. The fight against poverty - more urgent now than ever - was predicated not only on economic growth but also on the sharing of the benefits of growth.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/58/172) contained recommendations with which his delegation fully concurred. In particular, the report stressed that the social development of developing countries and their capacity to pursue integrated socio-economic policies required their effective participation in international decision-making and norm-setting, including in international financial forums. Yet it was obvious that multilateralism did not as yet extend to the economic sector. The developing countries' inclusion in the work of those bodies was therefore an imperative necessity. At the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development, States had expressed the will to achieve social development for all in a globalizing world and to promote the effectiveness of global institutions in the fight against poverty. The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization, established under the auspices of the International Labour Organisation in 2002, was expected in 2004. His delegation hoped that it would generate practical ideas for changes that would make the globalization process more equitable and its benefits more widely accessible.

4. The report of the Secretary-General on the Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/58/160) correctly pointed out that the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action would require sustained action at all levels and that the success or otherwise of the implementation process would be manifested at the national level. In recognition of that reality, his Government had developed a national policy on ageing, which represented a significant step forward in promoting the rights of older persons in Tanzania. Furthermore, his Government was preparing to host a regional workshop on aging and poverty in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Help-Age International. The workshop was of particular importance at a time where grandparents were often obliged to assume parental duties owing to the tragic consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The role of older women being thus likely to develop still further, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in policies on ageing acquired added significance.

5. *Ms. Londoño, (Colombia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

6. **Mr. Kaderi** (Morocco) said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth

[1] To be issued.

special session of the General Assembly had represented a positive turning point by accentuating the need to improve the living standards of a large part of the world's population and the importance of the fight against poverty, marginalization, unemployment and disease. Those orientations had since been confirmed at other summits and United Nations conferences on economic and social issues. In that connection his delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B dealing with the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of important conferences and summits held under the auspices of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. The international community was called upon to spare no effort in coming to the assistance of developing countries so as to enable them to meet their development goals and thus improve the standard of living of their respective populations.

7. With regard to social development, Morocco had adopted a national strategy aimed at eliminating poverty, improving the quality of social services, boosting employment, developing education, fighting illiteracy and improving the physical and social well-being of the whole population and, in particular, of its poorest sections.

8. Emphasizing the need to implement the 20/20 system of distribution adopted at the Copenhagen World Summit, according to which at least 20% of the national budget and 20% of donor assistance were to be devoted to essential social programmes, he said that Morocco had, with that end in view, prepared a report on essential social services in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. In Morocco, 15.6% of ODA and 17.76% of the national budget were allocated to those services. Moreover, his Government had, in 1999, set up a Social Development Agency whose main purpose was to provide institutional support to organizations submitting social development projects for the country's poorest regions. Those organizations acted in partnership with major social and economic actors and participated in the preparation of projects with international partners such as the European Union and UNDP.

9. As regards disabled persons, Morocco had taken steps to fight the discrimination to which such persons were exposed and had devised a programme of action executed in collaboration with specialized agencies of the United Nations. His country was among the seven members of the group of African States within the Working Group set up by the Ad Hoc Committee on a comprehensive and integral convention on protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities to prepare and present a draft text that would serve as the basis for negotiation by member States and observers at the Ad Hoc Committee.

10. In August 2003 his Government had organized a conference on youth with the participation of representatives of many religions, cultures and civilizations. On that occasion, King Mohamed VI had said that youth was the bearer of great hopes, embodied the values of peace, justice and cooperation, and invested its energies in the service of sustainable development.

11. The family was the core of his country's social fabric and his Government therefore supported all measures in preparation for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.

12. **Ms. Sonaike** (Nigeria), speaking on agenda items 105 and 106, said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Noting that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/58/172) called for the creation of an enabling environment and the adoption of effective measures, including conflict prevention, in order to meet the objectives of overall development and poverty eradication, she said that that was one of the reasons for the establishment of NEPAD by African leaders.

13. Her country was, however, concerned by the widening gap in social development existing between North and South countries.

14. She welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation for partnership between developed and developing countries as a complement to the latter's efforts to promote their social development and reduce poverty. However, it was essential to address the issue of globalization, which was generating severe financial crises, prolonged economic insecurity, greater social inequalities and marginalization in the developing world.

15. Trade liberalization was also having a most negative impact on the family by deepening family

poverty and generating chronic poverty in the least developed countries. Aware of the family's major role in national development, Nigeria was endeavouring to provide parents with the means of discharging their duty to their children. It had developed youth employment policies and was currently implementing a programme of action for the development of youth. The United Nations, all Member States, the relevant NGOs and the private sector must, for their part, collaborate actively in addressing the problem of poverty, with special emphasis on three types of intervention: provision of basic social services, promotion of human rights, and creation of employment opportunities.

16. Thanks to United Nations activities in the social field, growing attention was today given to vulnerable groups. In April 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing had resulted in the adoption of a political declaration and of the Madrid Plan of Action. Her Government had always acknowledged the role of the elderly in social development and had incorporated their needs in its national planning. She also welcomed the attention given to the second session of Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, and hoped that the Working Group working on the text of the convention would complete the draft at an early date.

17. In conclusion, she expressed full agreement with the view of the Commission on Social Development concerning the need for focused dialogue among development partners on the crucial issue of social development. The process was a complex and important one that required active commitment and support on the part of all development actors in both developed and developing countries.

18. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), speaking on agenda item 105, said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and was committed to participating actively as a member of the Working Group of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

19. Aware of the cohesion of the economic and social dimensions of the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration, Uganda had adopted a poverty eradication plan with the following four fundamental goals: rapid and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation; good governance and security; increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes; and enhanced quality of life for the poor. Some positive results had already been achieved. Primary education was free and compulsory everywhere in her country, school enrolment rates were high and the youth literacy rate exceeded 80%. Gender equality was being promoted in schools as well as in the political sphere, over 87% of young females being literate and 25% of parliamentary seats being held by women.

20. Environmental sustainability stood at over 24% of the total nationally protected land area, and 79% of the total population now had access to improved sanitation.

21. The fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases was inextricably linked to social development, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, including Uganda, where it had profound economic, social and security implications. Her country was anxious to familiarise itself with practices and strategies appropriate to its situation. Support was needed in connection with the following problems: anti-retroviral therapy and opportunistic infections; orphans and vulnerable children; evaluation models; capacity building; advocacy; research; vaccine development; and internally displaced persons in conflict areas.

22. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo), speaking on agenda item 106, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Almost 10 years after the World Summit for Social Development and three years after the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, it was evident that the reasons for holding the Summit were as present as ever. In his report on the world social situation in 2003 (A/58/153), the Secretary-General rightly stressed the close links between vulnerability and poverty. Indeed, it was the poor who suffered most severely from economic upheavals, natural disasters and conflict situations as well as from scourges such as HIV/AIDS.

23. The recurrent conflicts that had taken place in his country during the past 10 years had jeopardized all development efforts. Today, 70% of the population was living below the poverty line. Other consequences included increased numbers of street children, child

trafficking, prostitution and above all massive unemployment, principally among the young. The Government regarded youth employment as a moral as well as a political, economic and social goal and had accordingly launched a multi-annual programme to be executed in all relevant activity sectors.

24. At a more general level, the Government had launched a programme known as "New Hope", whose goals were elimination of unemployment, poverty reduction and improvement of access to basic services and of the quality of life. It had also drawn up a detailed programme for the years 2004-2009 in harmony with the document on poverty reduction strategy currently being negotiated with the Bretton Woods institutions.

25. His delegation was grateful to the World Bank, UNDP and the European Union for their assistance to his Government's programme of demobilization and reintegration of former soldiers, as well as to UNDP and UNICEF for their support of his Government's efforts aimed at consolidating peace and promoting development.

26. As regards the struggle against HIV/AIDS, a national strategy based on decentralization and on a multi-sectoral approach had been developed for the period 2003-2007. It was being implemented by the National Council to Combat HIV/AIDS, placed under the direct authority of the Head of State.

27. Lastly, he endorsed the conclusions of the forty-first session of the Commission on Social Development devoted to national and international cooperation in the service of social development, and welcomed their approval by the Economic and Social Council at its main session in 2003.

28. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi), after associating himself with the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, said that his Government placed the eradication of poverty at the centre of the national development agenda.

29. His Government was endeavouring to complement market mechanisms, correct market distortions, maintain social stability and create a national economic environment that promoted sustainable growth and rural development. Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper provided guidance in the implementation of programmes and projects targeting vulnerable groups, including women, youth, orphans and persons with disabilities. The Malawi Social Action Fund III was harnessing the knowledge and expertise of NGOs and donors towards improving the quality of life of the whole population.

30. HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis were continuing to reverse years of hard-won gains in the economic and social fields in his country. Limited institutional and human capacity and financial resource constrains stood in the way of attaining the goals of the programme of action, but it was gratifying to note that more donor partners were extending assistance to meet the resource requirements of the national response.

31. His delegation welcomed the initiatives of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in identifying priorities for policy-related research on ageing in Africa, and requested that similar technical assistance be extended at the national level, especially in the area of capacity building.

32. His Government fully supported the establishment of a working group by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Comprehensive and Integral International Convenition to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. It also welcomed the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.

33. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on agenda item 105, associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Far from improving, the situation of millions of people in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean had worsened overall. The UNDP Human Development Report for 2003 showed that 54 countries were now poorer than in 1990; life expectancy in 34 countries had fallen primarily as a result of HIV/AIDS, and more people in 21 countries were suffering from hunger than in 1990. Collective and immediate action by the international community was needed in order to avert further decline.

34. At the national level, the Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Development Strategy Documents, prepared in consultation with civil society organizations, underpinned the adoption of an integrated socio-economic approach to national

policy-making. The current level of poverty was to be halved by the year 2015, significant attention being given to the most vulnerable populations in rural and interior regions.

35. Notwithstanding international assistance and the reduction of the debt-servicing burden, Guyana, as a heavily indebted country, did not have sufficient resources to meet the needs of the social sector, particularly in terms of education, health and housing. Generally speaking, the worsening of the terms of international trade translated into an insufficient and unstable supply of finances for development. That situation had to be remedied.

36. **Ms. Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), speaking on agenda items 105 and 106, said that her delegation subscribed to the statements of the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. It also supported General Assembly resolution 57/163 as well as the decisions adopted at the twenty-fourth special session, the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and programme of action, and NEPAD.

37. She appealed to the international community to assist her country, through development funds, to recover from a war that had lasted for more than six years and had destroyed its socio-economic infrastructure, and to attain its priority goals in the sphere of social development.

38. At the national level, the Transitional Government was setting up machinery for the reeducation and guidance of orphans, young unemployed persons and street children, of whom there were very many in a country torn by war, and was also taking steps to provide social services for aged persons. It had reformed the Labour Code with a view to guaranteeing the rights of disabled persons and had adopted a series of measures aimed at promoting the rights of women and children and to consolidate family ties, in particular through an awareness-raising campaign on registration of marriages and births.

39. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) associated herself with the statement of the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Syria continuously improved its political laws and economic and social programmes aimed at protecting its most vulnerable citizens, and periodically re-examined the steps taken to improve their quality of life. The national association to combat unemployment had created 16 000 jobs and devoted millions of Syrian pounds to the implementation of national projects for the creation of employment opportunities. Her Government was endeavouring to ensure equality of opportunities not only in the sphere of employment but also in education and health.

40. The Syrian Arab Republic participated actively in regional meetings concerned with the protection of aged and disabled persons. It had recently taken part in the second session of the Ad Hoc Committee for the elaboration of a comprehensive and integral international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of disabled persons, and supported the adoption of such a convention.

41. The Syrian Arab Republic considered that it was impossible to speak of social development in an environment where the right to self-determination and fundamental human rights were not respected. In that respect, the situation in the Arab territories occupied by Israel, Israel's attacks against Lebanon and its daily exactions in Palestine ran counter to resolutions adopted by the international community and contributed towards the worsening of the economic, humanitarian and social situation in the occupied territories, as could be seen from the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/88-E/2003/84). Unless the international community took the necessary steps to end it, that humanitarian disaster was liable to have tragic consequences.

42. **Ms. Mohamed** (Kenya) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Kenya's development policies were always initiated at grass-roots level with the participation of local communities. That approach had been used in formulating the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as well as to the Economic Recovery for Wealth and Job Creation and National Development Plans.

43. The newly elected Government of Kenya had embarked on programmes to address social problems, in particular in the sphere of primary education, job creation and health. As regards the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases, it hoped that the adoption of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration would enable developing countries to import generic drugs.

44. The following four principles, dictated by the conviction that no Government could promote development without the support of the private sector and civil society, had guided the preparation of the PRSP: giving voice to the poor; participation and ownership; equitable distribution of national resources; and transparency and accountability.

45. Recalling the developed countries' commitment to increase their ODA to 0.7% of their GDP, she appealed to the international community to fight poverty and to reinforce cooperation. The developing countries had long suffered from the non-coherent policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which gave prominence to macro-economic questions at the expense of social needs. Her country called for reforms of those institutions that would involve the developing countries in their decision-making processes. The collapse of the WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancun, Mexico, was regrettable and could have been avoided. Its failure should serve as a lesson for the future and talks should resume sooner rather than later, adjustments being made to ensure inclusive, effective and meaningful participation by all members of WTO. Her delegation also suggested the holding of a conference to discuss the social aspects of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

46. In conclusion, she stressed the need for realistic and achievable targets.

47. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His Government attached particular importance to the integration of social and economic policies and was implementing the Good Governance for Human Security Programme, an integrated policy document with economic, social, environmental, political and legal aspects. Notwithstanding the progress made, Mongolia was still facing serious difficulties. Poverty affected about a quarter of the population by reason of the severe climate disasters which had struck the country for three consecutive years, depriving many rural people of all means of subsistence. The Government had therefore made poverty reduction one of its main priorities, committing itself to the MDG target of halving absolute poverty by 2015. It had also pledged to meet the poverty reduction criteria established by the Asian Development Bank and had finalized its Final Poverty Reduction Paper linking macro-economic and sectoral policy measures.

48. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives in social development (A/58/159), he was gratified to note that Member States continued to support the development of cooperatives and to recognize their contribution to social development. His delegation attached particular importance to the conclusions and proposals for future action contained in Section III of the report, which could be useful to Member States as well as to the United Nations. However, discussions with members of the Secretariat and with other delegations suggested that the Secretary-General's future reports on that subject might perhaps be more usefully focused on some particular aspect of cooperative development. Thus, the 2005 report might be devoted to the issue of strengthening the role of cooperatives in the eradication of poverty, in line with the multi-year programme of work of the Commission for Social Development according to which the Commission was to undertake a review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty in 2006. His delegation intended to submit a draft resolution to that effect for the Committee's consideration.

49. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea), after associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that in order to tackle social problems it was necessary above all to understand their root causes. Concern for the human being, both as an individual and as a member of a social group, stood at the heart of social development.

50. His Government, convinced that there could be no meaningful economic development without social development, had decided to place the latter at the top of its list of priorities, as witness the adoption of a National Charter in February 1994 and of a Macro-Policy in November of the same year, both documents including major sections devoted to the development of human resources. It had passed appropriate legislation, refined already existing policy guidelines and plans of action, and launched training and research programmes providing for preventive and corrective measures aimed at the protection and promotion of the rights of children (orphans, destitute children and children affected by war and/or displacement), women, youth, the elderly and the disabled, and strengthening the family unit. For obvious reasons, his country attached

great importance to the problems of disabled people and had since independence given priority to their integration in Eritrean society. His delegation welcomed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

51. Stressing the negative impacts of unsolved problems and conflicts on social development, in particular in his country, he said that any development could take place only in a country free from conflict and the fear of conflict. The international community must unite in the effort to control the new international forces, including globalization, that were threatening to undermine social development.

52. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali), after associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, referred to paragraph 56 of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up of the World Summit on Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/58/172) and recalled the importance of coordinated and participatory policies for the attainment of social development goals. His Government, mindful of the fact that Mali's population was 70% rural and that agriculture accounted for 42% of GDP, had committed itself to making intensive agriculture the motive force of the country's development, with cotton occupying a preponderant place. In that connection, he deplored the large subsidies granted to European and American cotton producers, which penalized African producers.

53. His Government had undertaken a number of initiatives on behalf of persons in difficulties, the elderly, the family, the disabled and youth, such as the decision to proclaim the month of October "National Solidarity Month"; the establishment in 1996 of a research institute on gerontology and geriatrics pursuant to the World Plan of Action on Ageing; the creation of a National Council for the Elderly to coordinate the activities of regional and local senior citizens' associations; a reform of family law and preparations for the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family; proposal made to the African Union, through the Pan-African Union of Disabled Persons, to declare 1999-2009 the "African Decade of the Disabled"; and incorporation of the problem of unemployment and underemployment in the Government's sectoral policies and strategies for fighting poverty.

54. Expressing strong regret at the failure of the WTO negotiations at Cancun, he called for greater justice and equity in international trade relations with a view to promoting economic development in all countries.

55. **Mr. Boonpracong** (Thailand) said that his country attached special importance to the two themes of the Secretary-General's report (A/58/172), namely policy coherence and partnership (paragraph 6 of the report). Absorbing the experience of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, Thailand had adopted people-centred and coherent economic and social policies, as reflected in the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006). Its economic policies designed to alleviate poverty and promote employment were pursued in harmony with social policies aimed at strengthening local communities, protecting vulnerable groups and promoting human development. The "One Village, One Product" scheme was designed to improve people's quality of life by enabling them to live on their own produce. The establishment of a Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in 2002 had further improved social integration, coordination and policy coherence while meeting more effectively the needs of vulnerable groups.

56. At the international level, Thailand had launched several initiatives designed to promote partnership between developed and developing countries, in particular the Economic Cooperation Strategy between Cambodia, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand and the Asia-wide partnership known as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, initiated by Thailand in 2002. His country was going to host the forthcoming APEC summit to be held in Bangkok from 18 to 21 October 2003. Beyond the region, Thailand played a contributive role in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and had, jointly with UNCTAD, established the International Institute for Trade and Development.

57. Reviewing his Government's activities on behalf of various vulnerable groups, he said that Thailand was committed to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons and was a member of the working group set up by the Ad Hoc Committee. It was convinced that strong family units were essential to the well-being of society and the

nation as a whole. A Bureau of Women's and Family Affairs had recently been established within the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. A series of national activities were to be launched on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The 2nd National Plan for Older Persons (2002-2021) dealt with the question of social integration of the elderly, and the current National Plan on Women's Development also took the ageing perspective into account. Lastly, his Government intended to undertake educational reforms with a view to strengthening the capacities of young people and preparing them to assume entrepreneurship roles in the future.

58. In conclusion, he reiterated his country's commitment to pursue social development goals in a spirit of respect for human rights and dignity, as well as to nurture a stable, secure, just and caring society.

59. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan), after associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, deplored the bleak situation described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/172), and shared his regret that eight years after the Copenhagen Declaration on social development, the commitments made on that occasion and reiterated at the Millennium Summit were still so far from being realised.

60. As a national of a country of South Asia, a region where over 30% of the population was living below the poverty line, he particularly appreciated the Secretary-General's view that conflict prevention was an integral part of the quest for social progress, development and reduction of poverty. It was unfortunate that his country's calls for sustained and meaningful dialogue for peaceful settlement of long-standing disputes in the region had not met with a positive response.

61. Recalling the definition of the family appearing in article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he said that while family forms had changed over the years, that definition remained as true as ever. Viewing the family as the first line of defence against social chaos, Pakistan wished to see the family unit in the Division of Economic and Social Affairs to be strengthened and given the necessary means to promote mainstreaming of the family in the programmes and work of the United Nations.

62. His country's profoundly respectful attitude, rooted in tradition and the injunctions of Islam, towards its approximately 8.5 million older citizens was reflected in the creation of a national task force of distinguished senior citizens to conduct studies and surveys with a view to recommending policies and programmes to be formulated in conformity with realities on the ground. Pakistan was also engaged in preparing its national MDG report dealing, in particular, with issues such as empowerment of local communities and women, restoration of participatory democracy, and accountable governance.

63. In conclusion, he said that Pakistan had set out on the path to sustained growth and development and was determined to pursue that goal.

64. **Mr. Tidjani** (Cameroon), speaking on agenda items 105 and 106, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation subscribed fully to the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in document A/58/172, with particular emphasis on the importance of coordinated and participatory policies in promoting the goals of social development (paragraph 56). In his view, such coordination required not only the integration of economic and social policies but also a better strategy to promote a culture of peace and conflict prevention, as well as the increased participation of all economic and social partners. Concerted action had to be taken at both national and international levels in order to overcome the adverse effects of globalization.

65. Welcoming the new international initiatives on behalf of youth promotion, namely the world employment programme of ILO and the Secretary-General's youth employment network, as well as the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for least developed, landlocked and small developing island countries, he appealed to the developed countries to honour the commitments they had undertaken in the sphere of trade, debt alleviation and development assistance in order to encourage the efforts being made by the developing countries and help them to overcome their problems due to poverty, conflicts and HIV/AIDS.

66. His Government, deeply committed to fighting poverty and firmly convinced that strengthening of civil and political rights went hand in hand with meeting economic and social needs, had introduced a number of anti-corruption measures as well as

measures in the fields of education and health. It had also adopted a sectoral policy declaration on health focused on the fight against epidemics, a new Schools Act giving prominence to basic education, a plan of action on nutrition and food security, a national policy document on employment and a declaration on a national strategy to combat poverty. It was eager to fulfil its commitments and to ensure the effective and sustained realization of development, and hoped to be able to count on the international community's support in its endeavours.

67. **Ms. Sherpa** (Nepal) said that her country, aided by the international community, had endeavoured to improve the quality of life of its population, 85 % of which was rural. Population growth, economic recession, poverty, lack of infrastructures and industries and the Maoists' destructive policy all combined in slowing down development, but her Government, which was currently implementing its tenth five-year plan, was doing its best to deal with problems in the fields of health, education, provision of drinking water, sanitation, decentralization and agriculture. It was also tackling such problems as youth employment, trafficking in women and gender inequalities, and had invited the national commission on women's affairs to draw up a plan of action for the promotion of women.

68. Her country considered that social development had to be approached in a coherent and concerted manner. Social problems concerned not only individual countries but the international community as a whole. Globalization should strengthen economic and social development processes worldwide.

69. Her Government welcomed the efforts being made in connection with the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and called for the implementation of the world programme of action for youth adopted in 1995 as well as of the Madrid declaration and plan of action on ageing. It was, however, concerned by the fact that, despite the Monterrey Consensus, the ODA goal of 0.7% of the developed countries' GDP was still far from being attained, but hoped that international cooperation – both South-South and between developed and developing countries – would result in greater assistance to least developed, landlocked and small developing island countries.

70. **Ms. Lalji** (Suriname), speaking on agenda item 106, said that it was important to ensure youth participation not only in consultations prior to decision-making but also in the decision-making process itself. Progress still needed to be made in that area.

71. Women, children and young people were generally the first to be affected by crises and the family unit was often threatened. Studies showed that children growing up in a family environment had a better chance of becoming adults well integrated in society. The family unit had to be protected.

72. But there was also a positive side to the medal. Young Surinamese were participating in the decision-making and policy formulation process. At the regional level, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) provided for the appointment of two youth ambassadors in each Member State.

73. The Caribbean countries had the second highest (after Africa) number of persons affected by HIV/AIDS. Such persons often being young, the youth ambassadors played an important role in fighting that scourge, as also did UNICEF and UNAIDS whose assistance was greatly appreciated. Many young people in developing countries were obliged to resort to prostitution in order to survive, thus running the risk of catching sexually transmissible diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. The problem was more serious than might be thought, for such diseases endangered the development and even the survival of communities. It was therefore essential to consult the young in those matters and to finance the necessary programmes. Partnerships should also be created between young people and their respective Governments and between young people and regional and international organizations. The problems in question could not be resolved in isolation.

74. **Mr. Husain** (Organization of the Islamic Conference), speaking on agenda item 106, said that his organization fully supported the ongoing initiatives in connection with the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and in particular the work on the family being done within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

75. The natural family being the basic social unit, his Organization supported the goal of strengthening the family in order to build a healthy society. The representative of Iran, speaking as Chairman of the

OIC Group at the United Nations, had stressed the importance its member States attached to family values and to the need to strengthen national capacities for addressing family concerns. Representatives of other OIC States, notably Benin, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, had drawn attention to the opportunity offered by the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 to strengthen national and international institutions engaged in efforts to address problems in that field.

76. At the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the OIC had advocated certain measures, such as the issuance of declarations by Heads of State and the setting up of national coordination mechanisms to harmonize policies, develop programmes in support of the family, and facilitate mainstreaming of family concerns in all national development efforts. The United Nations had a crucial role to play in that connection, and strengthening of the family unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was therefore desirable.

77. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Food and Agricultural Organization) said that the social dimension of rural development was an important part of FAO's mandate. FAO was undertaking normative work on various aspects of the impact of population ageing on rural development. That impact was determined by factors such as population density, economic productivity, economies of scale, agricultural technologies, and social and economic policies.

78. The shift towards an older age structure could, in certain settings, lead to livelihood strategies becoming less forward-looking and could evolve towards less labour-intensive activities. It could also lead to problems such as isolation, poor nutrition and insufficient means of subsistence, particularly in the case of women. The trend should not, however, be viewed as entirely negative. The experience and skills of older persons were irreplaceable. While the process of population ageing posed numerous challenges to food security and rural development, it also offered a unique opportunity to rethink existing developmental strategies.

79. The HIV/AIDS epidemic constituted a major obstacle to rural development and to the fight against poverty and hunger, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Because it took its greatest toll among young adults, the epidemic had a devastating impact on human resources, economic productivity, management of natural resources, and social organization and economic development in general. Since agriculture was the largest industry in many AIDS-stricken countries, the epidemic directly affected agricultural production and security of food supplies. It was essential that rural development strategies should appropriately reflect the realities of the HIV/AIDS scourge. FAO, for its part, was working with affected member countries and other partners such as IFAD, WFP and UNAIDS to develop strategies designed to mitigate its effects.

80. Education and training were among the most powerful weapons in the fight against rural poverty. Unfortunately, however, their importance in that connection was often overlooked. Farmers with basic education were better equipped to make more informed decisions both for themselves and for their communities and to participate actively in promoting economic, social and cultural dimensions of development. Those who had to find work outside the farm were also more likely to be hired if they possessed basic literacy skills. With a view to improving the education of rural children and youth, FAO and UNESCO had jointly launched a partnership initiative on education for rural people at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. More than 60 partners among international agencies, Governments and NGOs had already joined the initiative. The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative (SARD) and the proposal to create a rural investment forum also deserved mention in that connection.

81. With regard to food security, the Heads of State and Government assembled in Rome in June 2002 had renewed their commitments made at the World Food Summit in 1996 and had called on all parties to reinforce their efforts to form an international alliance against hunger.

82. It had to be noted, however, that the situation gave grounds for grave concern. If the current trend continued, the goal of halving the number of the world's hungry people would take a hundred years to attain.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

83. **Ms. Kalay-Kleitman** (Israel) thought it absurd that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic should accuse Israel of violating human rights and

humanitarian law. The Syrian dictatorship was occupying a neighbour State and was known to be supporting, financing and sheltering terrorists in violation of the basic standards of international law. It ought to be the last to speak of justice and law. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic had referred to the humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people. The real humanitarian crisis was in Israel, where day-to-day life was so perturbed that families did not know whether they would be coming home safe and sound in the evening. The measures taken by Israel in response to atrocities committed on its territory, such as suicide bombings, were acts of self-defence.

84. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that using terrorism as an excuse for attacking another nation was an obvious violation of international law and of numerous Security Council resolutions, as well as a shameful act. Every country in the Middle East had a right to speak of terrorism except Israel, the country that had brought terrorism to the region from the first day of its creation. Many members of the Israeli Government, including ministers and even Prime Ministers, had been members of terrorist groups such as Haganah. Some were even being pursued by international justice.

85. The massacres of Sabra, Chatila and Jenin should not be forgotten. Israel ought to be ashamed to speak of respect of international law, for it had been the first to refuse to comply with Security Council resolutions concerning the occupied Arab lands. The military aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic and the violation of Lebanon's air space, condemned by the entire international community, were the most recent violations.

86. The Committee must also remember the Palestinians, whom Israel had displaced, uprooted and driven out from the first day of its creation and who had found refuge in many countries, including Syria.

87. The situation in the occupied Arab territories was the result of continuing Israeli occupation and of the day-to-day oppression of the Palestinians. Security would not be guaranteed until the occupied lands were returned to their lawful owners.

88. The Syrian Arab Republic was an independent sovereign country whose conduct was dictated by its national interests.

89. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), exercising her right to reply to the representative of Israel, said that when Israel spoke of terrorism it could on no account dissimulate or deny the fact that it was an occupying power and was present as such in Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The reason for the present problems was the existence for more than three decades of an occupation – transformed over the years into a brutal and violent form of colonialism - that denied the rights and the very existence of the Palestinian people and contributed towards the phenomenon of suicide bomb attacks against civilians, which the Palestinian Authority had, moreover, condemned on several occasions.

90. Since Israel had tried to justify its military action against the Palestinians, and now against the Syrian Arab Republic, by the fight against terrorism and its infrastructures, she wished to point out that nothing could justify such serious violations of international humanitarian law. Thirty-six years of military and colonial occupation by Israel were at the origin of today's problems, and in particular of acts of terror, which were to be condemned.

91. **Mr. Roschdy** (Egypt) asked when the Committee was to embark on the question of the statute of the Family Unit. The information to be provided in that connection should not be ignored on any account.

92. **The Chairman** said that she would raise the question with the Bureau. The matter would be discussed in the next few days.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.